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SUBJECT: FY 2006 Re-declaration of Disaster in
Zimbabwe for Complex Emergency

Ref: (a) Harare 1507 (b) Harare 1447

(c) Harare 1330 (d) Harare 1489

Summary

1. The humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe is deteriorating due to a variety of factors, including: continued economic and especially agricultural collapse brought about by government mismanagement and corruption, the government's displacement of large numbers of families, in urban areas through its Operation Restore Order, and in rural areas due to renewed commercial farm takeovers. Close to 6 million people country-wide may require food assistance until the next harvest in April 2006. The Ambassador has determined that the continuing complex emergency in Zimbabwe is of sufficient magnitude to warrant USG humanitarian assistance in FY 2006.

Background

2. Zimbabweans are caught in a downward spiral of increasing poverty and food insecurity caused by the GOZ's counter-productive economic policies. The high HIV/AIDS prevalence and the general collapse of the rule of law are also contributing factors. The sharp economic decline and hyperinflation in Zimbabwe (by some estimates approaching four digits) are having dire consequences on the country's population, notably extremely high unemployment, the deterioration of social services, shortages of basic goods and fuel, and eroded purchasing power.

3. During the 2004-2005 growing season, parts of Zimbabwe suffered from drought conditions that exacerbated poor government policies and resulted in an extremely poor harvest. Estimates of 2005 maize production range from 350,000-600,000 MT, compared to a national requirement of some 1.8 million MT. The Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) has announced that it will import 1.2 million MT of maize to fill the gap. However, independent observers question whether the GOZ has sufficient foreign exchange to import such a quantity and whether the most vulnerable populations will be able to access this food. International observers estimate that as many as 5.8 million people may require assistance to meet their food needs during this hunger season (Reftel A). Regardless of rainfall, the FY 2006 harvest is also expected to be poor given the unaffordability of seeds for most poor households and the general unavailability of other inputs, particularly fuel and fertilizer (Reftel B).

4. Internal displacement and urban vulnerability have also substantially increased over the past five months, largely due to the GOZ's Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order), which destroyed thousands of homes and businesses deemed "illegal" by the government (Reftel C). According to, the report of the UN Special Envoy, the operation resulted in the displacement of some 700,000 people and indirectly affected up to 2.4 million people. Five months after the operation, many households are still living in the open or are crammed into dwellings which were not destroyed. Although urgent needs remain in shelter, water and sanitation, health, and protection, humanitarian access to the affected populations has been extremely problematic

(Reftel D).

Current Humanitarian Response

15. The Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) has refused to appeal for international food assistance but has stated that it will accept assistance if provided. WFP is currently expanding its food aid program in order to reach some 4 million vulnerable people by the height of the hunger season in January. The GOZ has not yet signed a Memorandum of Understanding with WFP, which outlines procedures for food distribution. The GOZ has, however, given WFP written approval of its list of proposed NGOs to distribute food, which included approval for the consortium of NGOs funded bilaterally by USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) known as C-SAFE. USAID/FFP provides funding to the C-SAFE NGOs to feed 600,000 people in addition to those covered by WFP's food program.

16. In September 2005, the UN circulated a Common Response Plan requesting some \$30 million to address the needs of populations adversely affected by Operation Murambatsvina. The government, however, has been uncooperative for which they were criticized this month by UN Secretary General Annan. In collaboration with NGOs and donors, the UN is also preparing a consolidated appeal (CAP) to address the wider, deteriorating humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. The CAP will likely be launched in November 2005.

16. In FY 2005, USG humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe totaled over \$46 million from USAID/FFP, and from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). Of this amount, over \$1.7 million was provided by OFDA specifically to address the victims of Operation Murambatsvina.

Mission request

17. Based on the complexity and magnitude of the continuing crisis the Ambassador believes that the GOZ has neither the resources nor the capacity nor the willingness to respond effectively to Zimbabwe's humanitarian situation. Therefore, the Ambassador exercises his disaster assistance authority to declare Zimbabwe to be in a state of complex emergency, and requests continued assistance from USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP during FY 2006 to meet humanitarian needs in Zimbabwe.

Schultz